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THE
Fourth Centennial Anniversary
OF THE
MORAVIAN CHURCH.

THREE SERMONS,
PREACHED ON THE ANNIVERSARY, MARCH 1ST, 1857, !

In the First Moravian Church of Philadelphia,

BY THE

REV. EDMUND DE SCHWEINITZ,
PASTOR.

REV. J. F. BERG, D.D.,
PASTOR OF THE SECOND DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH.

REV. R. NEWTON, D.D.,
RECTOR OF ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

The Board of Elders of the First Moravian Church, being desirous to perpetuate the memory of the happy Anniversary of March 1st, passed a resolution, requesting the three clergymen who preached on the occasion to furnish copies of their sermons for publication. This they kindly consented to do, and the discourses are herewith presented to the public in the order in which they were delivered.

P. A. CRÉGAR,
Secretary of the Board.



Morning Service.

SERMON

BY THE REV. EDMUND DE SCHWEINITZ, PASTOR OF THE
CHURCH.

“Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.”—DEUTERONOMY xxxii. 7.

THERE are times in the life of the Christian, when the sense of God's goodness is so great and overpowering that words fail to describe it; and there are seasons in the history of a church, when no human tongue can adequately celebrate the great deeds of Him who is “the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.” If I were to consult my own feelings now, I would stand in silent reverence before God, and let my heart bring a wordless tribute of thanksgiving and praise. To tell of fifty

or one hundred years of a church-covenant, is a glorious thing; but who can pray as he ought to pray, who can preach as ought to be preached, when the years of that covenant number four times one hundred? When throughout a century, and a century again, and two more centuries, the solemn promise has stood fast amid prosperity and peace, amid tribulation and distress, "Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God?" Did David, inspired as he was by the Holy Ghost, say of the providence of God, "such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it;" how much more must my trembling lips confess their inability to magnify the grace of God, revealed to our fathers, to generation after generation until this day! And yet for this very purpose are we gathered in the sanctuary. Here is a waiting people, "with hearts enlarged," and souls exalted by jubilant joy; "necessity is laid upon me"—I must proclaim, and even though it be with a stammering tongue, the wonders which the stretched-out arm of our covenant God has wrought.

It will, I think, accord with your expectations, and the nature of this first service of our festival, if I set before you the history of the event we are commemorating, and then show what that history teaches. To this end I selected the text read before: "Remember the days of old, consider the

years of many generations; ask thy father and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee." These words form part of the song of Moses, which he spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel, previous to his departure from earth. In that song generally, he exalts Jehovah for his undeserved mercy, and reproves the people because of their frequent sins; in the verse of the text, he bids the tribes call to mind the whole series of events that had taken place since their father Abraham was called, until that day when they were abiding in the valley over against Beth-peor, and had come almost within sight of the promised land. There is therefore a solemn exhortation before us, to meditate on the history of the past, and to learn wisdom by its lessons. This exhortation concerns us to-day, as much as it did Israel of old. Let us then "*remember,*" "*consider,*" and "*ask.*"

I. We are to "remember the days of old;" and this I understand as referring to *the founding of the Church, four centuries ago.*

It would lead me entirely too far, if I were to enter on all the details of our history. A series of discourses would be necessary for that. Hence I will merely present to you, in quick succession, pictures of the principal events to which the church owes its existence. And even these pictures can be drawn in outlines only.

The countries to which we direct our attention, are Bohemia and Moravia, at present constituting provinces of the Austrian empire. Passing over the early history of Christianity in these lands, its introduction from the Greek church, in the ninth century, its original purity, but gradual adulteration by the superstitions of Rome, the appearance of the great Reformer, John Huss, his martyrdom and the fearful war which broke out in consequence of it, as facts of general history well known to the most of you; I will at once set before you the state of religious affairs, about the middle of the fifteenth century, after peace had been restored, and certain concessions granted to the Bohemians, by the Council of Basle.

Two denominations existed in the land, both legally recognised, the Roman Catholics, and the Utraquists. The latter constituted the national church of Bohemia, and by the decree of the Council just named, enjoyed the privilege of receiving the sacrament of the Lord's Supper under both kinds, (hence their name,) but in other respects were very similar to the Catholics, and almost as corrupt. At the head of the Utraquist church, which was the more numerous of the two, stood an eloquent ecclesiastic, Rockyzan by name. He had been chiefly instrumental in securing the concessions made at Basle, and his influence in Bohemia

was great. But there were also dwelling in the land, and particularly in the city of Prague, men of faith, who held the pure doctrines of Huss. They had belonged to the more enlightened portion of the Taborite* party, and were as little satisfied with the false peace, as they had been with the contention of arms. It was their heart's desire before God, that a general revival of pure and undefiled religion might begin; and every thing in the church not in accordance with the New Testament be removed. Among these men, my brethren, we find our spiritual forefathers. This is the first picture which I would set before you.

And now let me proceed to show you how manifest a leading there was on the part of the Lord, in all things appertaining to founding of the church; how those awakened and longing souls simply followed after Him. The hope which they at this time had, was the reformation of the Bohemian church; nothing more. It never entered their minds to establish one of their own. They looked to Rockyzan for counsel and aid in the fulfilment of their wishes, and he, at first, seemed inclined to tread in the footsteps of Huss. But when

* The Hussites were divided into two parties, viz. the Calixtines and Taborites. The former contended chiefly for the restoration of the cup in the Communion, the latter wanted a thorough reformation of the church.

it came to choosing between the honour of the world, and the loss of all things for Christ's sake, he drew back. Then those men of faith and of God began to meet in private, in order to edify one another in the Word, and were unceasing in their prayers, that the Lord in mercy would show them a way, in which they at least could worship Him, as conscience dictated. This was the first step towards the founding of a church, and this is the second picture which I have to present.

But here is another. I will point out to you that spot of earth, where in the wisdom of God, the church should be established. About eighty-five miles from the city of Prague, near the confines of Bohemia and Silesia, stretching along the foot of a wooded mountain chain, and watered by two small streams, the Erlitz and the Adler, there lay a domain called Lititz. It belonged to the Regent of Bohemia, and was at that time in a state of devastation in consequence of the ravages of the Hussite war. On the bank of the Erlitz, crowning a high hill, arose an ancient castle, bearing the same name as the estate. Some of its walls and gates are still to be seen. To the east of it, lay the village of Zamberg, and to the north, surrounded on all sides by a deep forest, as its name denotes, the village of Kunwalde. Here, in the shadow of these feudal towers, and in the silent

recesses of these forests, was founded the church to which we are privileged to belong.

We pass to a new scene. There were abiding, in those days, in the barony of Lititz, several priests of the Utraquist denomination, who preached the gospel in its purity. Among these one in particular, Michael Bradacius by name, had earned for himself an evangelical reputation. When those men of Prague, of whom we have been speaking, heard of this priest, and of his testimony, they were moved in the spirit to go forth unto him. The Regent, at Rockyzan's request, granted them permission to settle on his domain, and soon a number of them prepared to seek this retreat. It was the year 1453. Strong in faith, bold in God, they turned their backs upon the city and all its corruptions, and took their way to the mountains and forests of the barony. My brethren, in that pilgrim company, recognise the patriarchs of your church. The names of the principal men among them have been preserved by history. They were Creicius, Gregory—a nephew of Rockyzan, Matthias of Kunwalde, Thomas Przelaucius, Elias Cherzenovius and Procopius. But even now they had no intention of beginning an ecclesiastical organization of their own: freedom of conscience was all they desired, and that had been promised them.

See them then in the next picture of our his-

tory, tranquilly sitting under the ministrations of Michael and a few other awakened priests. One is their Master, even Christ, they all are brethren; one faith unites their hearts, one desire after the sincere milk of the word; unscriptural ceremonies are abolished, church-discipline is restored; righteousness and peace have met together on that estate; other men of like mind frequently arrive from Prague; their communion is growing larger, and being more fully organized—when suddenly, at the instigation of bigoted priests on neighbouring domains, Michael and his associates are deposed from office, by the Consistory of the Utraquist Church. Those who are sent to take their places, prove to be as corrupt and fanatical as the clergy in general. Alas for the men of God who had hoped to find at Lititz a spiritual home! The evils from which they fled have followed them even into those mountains and forests. What shall they do?

We will look at a new picture and see. A deputation was sent to Rockyzan, to lay before him the grievances of the community at Lititz. But he refused to grant them a hearing, and declared that he would have nothing more to do with these troublers in Israel. Then the deputies turned to his assistant, Lupacius by name. He received them, and after having listened to their message, gave them, in substance, this advice: "The con-

stituted authorities will not grant you redress; take then the matter into your own hands; establish a church-communion among yourselves, and choose your own ministers." Momentous counsel! reaching much farther in its consequences than this man ever expected. The messengers returned to Lititz, and gave a report of their interview with Lupacius. Then light began to break in upon the troubled minds of that company of believers. Fully aware of the magnitude of the undertaking, and the fearful risks connected with it; they resolved to make the subject one of fervent, unceasing prayer. This having been done in private, a solemn convocation was called. It was the year 1457, therefore just four hundred years ago; the place where they assembled, in all probability, Kunwalde. Earnestly they deliberated, fervently they prayed as a united people, until the Lord, whose mercies never fail, filled their hearts with the assurance that a separation from the established and corrupt churches, was His holy will. And now they proceeded to organize a communion of their own. Their model was the ancient apostolical church; their only rule of faith, practice, and discipline, the New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ, as taught by Huss, whose disciples in the Lord they avowed themselves to be. Michael Bradacius was chosen minister; and, at a subsequent convocation, Gregory, Proco-

pius and Clenovicus were elected elders. The new church assumed the name of "Fratres Legis Christi," that is "Brethren of the Law of Christ," but soon changed it into the more simple appellation of "Fratres"—"Brethren." In after years, when their numbers had greatly increased, they called themselves the "Unitas Fratrum," that is, "The Unity of Brethren," which ancient name has been preserved to this day, and designates our whole united church, with all its provinces and mission fields, in whatever countries of the globe they may be.

This, my brethren, is the simple history of the first founding of our Zion, four centuries ago. Its organization, as the very nature of the case will lead us to suppose, was not completed at once. In that assembly at Kunwalde, and in that 1457th year of the Christian era, the corner-stone was laid. But the workmen laboured diligently for ten years longer, before the walls had all been built up. When, however, they were completed, the spiritual temple, by the grace of God, was goodly to look upon; the doctrine had been more fully defined, the discipline confirmed, and, above all, a regular and valid ministry established, by securing the Episcopal succession from a Waldensian Church on the confines of Austria.

Having thus fulfilled the first part of our text, and "remembered the days of old," we find that

sixty years before the reformation of Luther began, when nearly all the world was yet^e shrouded in Romish darkness, that Protestant Episcopal Church was founded, in which our lines have fallen.

II. And now let us take up the second part of the text, which bids us "*consider the years of many generations.*"

These words may be applied to *the course of events in the centuries that have been numbered, since the founding of the Church down to the present day.* I can again set before you the principal facts only, and that as briefly as possible.

No sooner did it become known in the land that the Brethren had organized a Church communion of their own, than a fearful and bloody persecution burst upon them. This was in the year 1458. Time would fail me to tell of all they suffered, how they were driven from their homes, cast into dungeons, stretched on the rack; how they fled into the forests, and hid themselves in the caves of the mountains; how the elders and ministers braved peril and sword, and went from place to place, comforting and exhorting the people; how in the dead of night, and in the temple of nature which God had built, they met for worship, and even held synods to consult on the welfare of the church; how when this first persecution had been stayed, other persecutions began, again and again, in the

course of years. Yet as it had been of old, so was it then; the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church. The more Rome persecuted, the more did the *Unitas Fratrum* increase, until in the beginning of the sixteenth century there were two hundred churches in Bohemia and Moravia, whose members belonged to all ranks of life, from the peasantry to some of the most ancient noble families. At a later period, in consequence of a persecution, the curtains of the Church were stretched forth even to Poland; and about the middle of the century just named, there were three Provinces; the Bohemian, the Moravian and the Polish, each governed, in local matters, by bishops of its own, but all united in general conventions, which were frequently held—a *Unitas Fratrum*, in the fullest sense of the term. The Brethren, moreover, paid particular attention to the cause of education, and had several Seminaries of learning; they cultivated diligently the sacred songs of Zion; they translated the Bible into the Bohemian vernacular, and had it printed at Venice, which was the first version of the Holy Scriptures in any living European language; and afterwards established no less than three printing-presses of their own, one in Moravia and two in Bohemia, whence, for several years, nothing but Bohemian Bibles were issued. Thus it appears that the Church, which had so mani-

festly been founded by the Lord, failed not to bring the fruit ordained by Him.

But now a change came over the scene of the labours of the Brethren. It was the first quarter of the seventeenth century, and Ferdinand II. swayed the sceptre of the Austrian Empire, to which Bohemia and Moravia now belonged. He was the personification of religious bigotry, and had solemnly sworn to extirpate heresy in all parts of his dominions. Hence the work began, and was prosecuted with fanatical perseverance. Not only the Brethren, but all the Protestants of Bohemia and Moravia suffered. The persecution, for the most part, was a bloodless one; cunningly devised, systematically carried out, Jesuits its champions. "Abjure evangelical faith, or leave the country!" This was the principle. Tens of thousands went into exile, while those who remained were forced to submit to Romish rule. The Brethren's Church in Bohemia and Moravia came to an end. In Poland it continued for some time longer, but soon an amalgamation with other Protestant denominations began, so that in the course of the second half of the seventeenth century, the Zion of our fathers, as a separate organization, ceased to exist. How glad were the enemies of the truth, how did they triumph, but—they "imagined a vain thing!" The Church was not

dead. It lived in a hidden seed of which man knew nothing. There is not, in all Church history, a more wonderful fact than the preservation of this seed, and its growth to that goodly tree which yet remains. Let us briefly trace it.

Many of the families who had continued in Bohemia and Moravia, although forced into an outward connexion with the Romish Church, nevertheless in secret cultivated the truth. And when the fathers and mothers of that generation passed away, they left unto their children, as a precious legacy, the traditions of the Church which they had known and loved. There were those among them who had strong, well nigh prophetic anticipations of a renewal of the *Unitas Fratrum*; especially the venerable bishop, Amos Comenius, who forms the connecting link between the ancient and renewed churches. When, with the remnant of his broken flock he was wandering into exile, and had reached the top of the mountain chain which separates Moravia from Silesia, he turned to cast a farewell look upon his native land, which he loved so well. Long and earnestly did he gaze; and then, in the fulness of contending emotions, fell upon his knees, on that mountain height, and prayed unto the God of his fathers, with strong cries and tears, that he might preserve a good seed in these former homes of truth, and from that seed

bid a new tree to grow. And when after many a year spent in exile, Comenius felt his life drawing to a close, in hope against hope, he cared for the consecration of another bishop, so that the succession might not become extinct. Praised be God, even our God, my brethren, that prayer was heard, this hope against hope was not put to shame. Half a century rolled by, and in the year 1722, a little company of awakened souls, descendants of the *Unitas Fratrum*, left house and home, and all they had in their native Moravia, in order to seek somewhere a spot of earth where they might worship God in spirit and in truth. They had formed no plan for the resuscitation of the old church; such an idea never entered their minds. *But God's time had come.* He who

“Moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform,”

led this little pilgrim band, consisting only of four men, two women and five children, in the dead of night, forth from the land of bondage, and brought them safely to Saxony. There he put into the heart of a great and noble man, Count Zinzendorf, to give them shelter on his estate, and permission to begin a settlement. With the words of the Psalmist on his lips, “Here the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself,

where she may lay her young, even thing altars, O Lord of hosts," one of those exiles, Christian David by name, struck his axe into the first tree felled for the building of Herrnhut. *This, my brethren, was the beginning of the Renewed Church.* Other immigrants from Moravia continued to arrive, and many Christians in Saxony joined them, so that in a few years, they numbered several hundred souls. They introduced the principles and discipline of their fathers; the Episcopate, which had been maintained through the prophetic anticipations of Comenius, was solemnly transferred to them; and thus was completed that church organization which still exists, and of which this congregation forms a part.

Having then briefly considered, as the text bids us, "the years of many generations," we can on this day of joy and jubilee declare, that the church which was apparently overwhelmed by the persecutions of the enemy, after an existence of two centuries, in the wonderful providence of God, re-awoke to life, and is now celebrating its fourth centennial anniversary. Nor is this festival confined to only one land of earth. In every continent, in countries of whose existence no man dreamed four hundred years ago, the churches of the Moravian Unity are this day bringing unto God our Saviour thanksgivings and praise. Let us take a brief sur-

vey of them. As there were of old, so are there now, three Provinces in the Church; the American, British and Continental. These have always remained numerically small, because they expend their strength on the foreign mission field, to which they were particularly called by the Lord. Numbering only about twenty thousand souls, they have, at this time, three hundred missionaries in foreign countries, nearly seventy stations, and more than seventy-one thousand converts. The home missionary work on the Continent,* which has for

* This Home Mission is generally called the "Diaspora," and is one of the most interesting works presented by the Church history of the present day. The principles which regulate it are different from those observed in our country. Persons belonging to the Diaspora do not separate from the established churches, but remain in full communion with them. They are formed into Societies, and each Society is either visited at stated times by a missionary, or he dwells permanently in its midst, holding meetings for prayer and the exposition of the Scriptures, and going from house to house with the consolations, exhortations and warnings of the Word. The grand object of this noble work is therefore to *increase the number of living members of Christ's universal Church*, a realization of Spenser's favourite idea of *ecclesiolæ in ecclesia*. The Diaspora extends over the following countries: Saxony, Prussia, Hanover, Brunswick, East Friesland, cities Bremen and Hamburg, Würtemberg, Switzerland, France, Denmark, Norway, Swe-

its object the conversion and sanctification of souls in the state churches, without separating them from these, is equally prosperous, comprising about one hundred thousand persons. So then we find, that the whole number of souls belonging, this day, to the Church founded four hundred years ago, amounts to not quite two hundred thousand; and that from the seed planted in Bohemia and Moravia, in 1457, to all appearances destroyed in the seventeenth century, but replanted in Saxony, in 1722, has grown a tree whose branches, in 1857, extend to our own country, to Central and South America, to the West Indies, to Greenland and Labrador, to Great Britain, to nearly all the lands of the Continent of Europe, to Russia, to the confines of China, and to South Africa. Who is there among us, my brethren, who will not therefore, in view of these "years of many generations," fervently say on this jubilee morning, with the Psalmist of old, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!" But let

den and Russia. In the last named country the work is very extensive, especially in the province of Livonia, where there are 232 chapels or meeting houses, and about 40,000 members. The number of missionaries at present engaged in the Diaspora is 122, according to the latest returns. The term "Diaspora," is taken from 1 Pet. i. 1, in the original Greek.

none forget solemnly to add, "Not unto us, not unto us, O, Lord, but unto thy name be the glory!"

III. And now, permit me in conclusion, to apply the last part of our text. We read, "*Ask thy father and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.*" We would ask our fathers this day, through the medium of their history to instruct us in lessons of righteousness; lessons which we individually may adopt as principles of our future Christian lives, and which the church unitedly may recognise as the rule of its future course. Very many might be given, but time does not permit. I will therefore adduce but two.

The first will, I think, be this: *a church founded on no other foundation than that of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being himself the chief corner-stone, is firmly founded, so that even the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* Our fathers had one great object particularly in view, and that was to constitute a living church, seen and known of all men, the majority of whose members should be true children of God. Hence, as to Christian life they laid very great stress on the discipline, and as to Christian doctrine, on the fundamental truths of the gospel, which are necessary to salvation; but did not bind the conscience of any one in respect to secondary points or dogmas. We may say that already in the Ancient, but particularly in the

Renewed Church, they made Augustine's principle their own: "In essentials, unity, in non-essentials, liberty, in all things, charity." The consequence was that the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, occupied a large place in the theology of our fathers, and that the truths respecting his eternal Godhead, and his meritorious sufferings and death were upheld with peculiar power and unswerving constancy. Now this freedom in non-essentials, and this necessity in essentials, must remain among us if we are to continue that Zion which our fathers founded. As soon as we should put forth a creed binding the conscience to certain doctrines not necessary to salvation, we would lose the distinctive feature of our covenant—a feature that renders possible the present visible and real unity of so many different nationalities—a feature, which in my estimation, points out the way of union to all evangelical churches of earth. Let us then, as a people, ever remember the first lesson which our fathers "shew," and our elders "tell" us to-day. And this the more, because it may be that the *Unitas Fratrum* yet has, in this very respect, a great mission to perform. The heart's desire of all true Christians of the age, whatever their name or their land may be, is union in the Lord Jesus Christ. If such union is ever to assume, previous to the Saviour's second advent, a more real and

permanent form than it occasionally bears in our day, then the elements now in the Unity of the Brethren, may prove efficacious; and He who ordained this people to lead the way in the great work of converting the heathen world, may have set them also to take an important part in the final development of his kingdom. But whatever be the future of the Church, may it only remain humble, as our fathers were, and be anew baptized with their spirit. There is not a congregation within our borders, which has not cause, this day, to cry unto the Lord, saying, "Renew our days as of old!"

The second and last lesson in righteousness, which our fathers "shew" and elders "tell," is *a personal devotion to Christ*. My brethren, this lesson concerns us all. We are "compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses." On every page of our history there are recorded instances of faith in Christ and love to Christ, amid dangers and persecutions, amid tortures and deaths, "in perils by land, in perils by sea," that speak to us in trumpet tones. No member of this church dare be satisfied with an ordinary degree of piety. If we would be true to our name, to our fathers, to our covenant, we must be ready to leave all and follow Jesus, through good and evil report, serving him with all our hearts, minds and souls, and with all

our strength. O! how is the frequent indifference manifested in our midst, put to shame by them who have gone before us. What are we performing to the glory of our Saviour's name, enjoying, as we do, every spiritual privilege that we need, compared with the works of faith which they accomplished in the face of much tribulation and fiery trials? There come sounding into our ears this morning, the voices of those men of God who were assembled at Kunwalde, four hundred years ago; and with them mingle the triumph-songs of dying martyrs; the night-hymns that arose in Bohemian forests; the solemn words of many a venerable bishop; the soul-thrilling prayer of the exile Comenius, as he knelt on the mountain-top—all, all invoking us to present our bodies and our souls a living sacrifice unto Christ, to come out fully from the world, and with growing earnestness to press toward the mark. May the Lord grant us grace to hear and understand. The most exalted celebration of this jubilee day, would be conversions among us to God. Yea, and if but *one* soul will arise from the sleep of death, in the strength of Him who worketh both to will and to do, and throw itself into the outstretched arms of everlasting mercy, not only our "joy shall be full," but there shall be joy in heaven among the angels of God, because a sinner has repented; joy

among the spirits of the fathers, now just men made perfect, because another soul, in the Zion of earth which they loved so well, has been born again, to the praise of their God, and of our God, of their Saviour, and of our Saviour.

Now unto this God, who is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," "be glory in the Church throughout all ages, world without end." Amen.

Afternoon Service.

SERMON

BY THE REV. J. F. BERG, D. D., PASTOR OF THE SECOND
DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH.

“For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God.”—1 THESS. iii. 9.

IN that symbol of apostolic doctrine, which, leaving out of view all question of origin, is confessedly an expression of undoubted Christian faith, two articles are affirmed, which may with eminent propriety be cited, on this memorial day. With one heart and voice, all who love the name of Jesus Christ avow, each for himself, for faith is a personal matter, “I believe the Holy Catholic church,—the communion of saints”—i. e. I hold as an article of Christian faith, that Christ Jesus has upon the earth, a church which is Holy and Catholic—a church which is universal, because confined by no sectional metes and bounds, it in-

cludes all of every race, and clime, and country, who, as living members of Christ's mystical body, hold the Head—a church, known upon earth, and therefore visible—but known, not by any exclusive ecclesiasticism, not by any prescriptive ritual—not by any tabernacle or temple service,—for the gospel recognises no ceremonial law—but a church built upon the foundation of prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone; known everywhere, by the evangelical simplicity of its creed and the purity of its profession; a church which is Catholic and Holy. The holiness of the church is the ground of her catholicity—the holiness of the church is the bond of her unity. Christ has but one true church upon earth. The church has but one Head, and therefore, it can have but one body. That body may have many members, but would it not be the height of folly, the first born of absurdities, for any one member of the body to arrogate to itself the office and prerogatives of all the other members. “For,” says St. Paul, “the body is not one member, but many.” Any form of ecclesiasticism, therefore, which rules out of Christ's record, those who, whilst holding the Head, receiving the Scriptures, professing the name of Christ, and adorning that profession by practical godliness, do not conform to prescriptions which Christ has not ordained—any system, which arro-

gates to itself a ceremonial prerogative, and looks down with haughty contempt upon the followers of the Lord Jesus, is invading the catholicity of that holy church, which as the body of Christ is not one member, but many. It is smiting with the fist of wickedness at the face of the Lord's Anointed. It is hewing with the sword of bigotry at the bond of the Church's unity. It is seeking by its arrogant and pretentious claims to annul the precious communion of the saints of the Most High. It is a weapon formed against Zion, forged and tempered in the infernal fires of lustful hatred and ambition, wielded in all ages of the church, from the era of primitive Christianity, foretold in prophecy, foreshadowed in the experience of the apostolic age, and tracing its dire developments, in acts of cruelty and outrage upon the body of Christ—blurring the page of history, and staining its annals with the blood-marked fingers of persecution. Now, that primitive symbol comes down to us from the early age, as an apostolic protest against all assaults upon the universality of Christian fellowship, and in the simple and sublime utterance of child-like faith proclaims—"I believe the Holy Catholic church, the communion of saints." I believe that they are, and that they exist by the appointment of God the Father Almighty, and of Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, and of the Holy Ghost, who dwells

in all the bodies of the saints as his temple, and knits them as members of the mystical body by that which every joint supplieth, to Jesus Christ, our covenant Head.

Here, then, is ground upon which those who are joined to Christ can meet in Christian fellowship. The members of the body may have and they must have various names, but the body is not therefore many, it is still one and undivided. And amid all the diversity of appellation, one name abides, still above every name—it is the name of Jesus. To him every knee is bowed, to him every hand is raised, to him every voice in all this militant host ascribes dominion and glory forever. Now, it is a precious truth, that in no age of the world, since that glorious ascension at Bethany, has Christ's body been hidden from the sight of man. The Prince of Life has never ceased from the hour of the pentecostal anointing to have his living representatives and confessors upon the earth. In the inscrutable wisdom of God, his church under the New Dispensation as under former covenants, has been obscured by the dark shadows of oppression and apostacy, but it has never been destroyed. The gates of hell have never prevailed against it. The word of its living Head has been held good in every age by the power of grace and truth, through the operation of the Holy Ghost; and gradually

through the temptations, the murmurings, the fiery trials and assaults of the wilderness, Israel's Joshua is leading the tribes of the Lord into the possession of their inheritance.

This fourth Centennial Anniversary presents the Moravian Church of the United Brethren in the very aspect which beautifully illustrates the truth, which we have endeavoured thus briefly to affirm. It is a link between the apostolic church and the churches of the Reformation. It dates, not its origin—for that would be a fatal concession, which Moravian wisdom, with all the harmlessness of the dove has never suffered any to extort—it dates, I say, not its origin, but the RENEWAL of the Brethren's church, from a period which runs back over four centuries, and is, therefore, anterior to the Reformation. The date of that mighty era in the history of the church and the world, has by common consent been fixed in the year 1517; but the church of the United Brethren in its early history reveals a Reformed church before the Reformation. Sixty years before the sound of the great trumpet of the Protestant Reformation startled the world with its tones of solemn earnestness, a Christian organization, Protestant in its firm enunciation of scriptural truth against the heresies of the age, was effected, amid scenes of suffering and persecution, which bathed its confessors in a baptism of martyrdom

and blood. The seed which in 1457 was springing in the green blade out of the ground, enriched by the ashes of John Huss and Jerome of Prague; the seed which for forty years had been germinating, since the 6th of July, 1415, when it had been sown broadcast by the winds which scattered the ashes of the heroic Huss—had already produced a harvest of full corn in the ear, when Luther and his great coadjutors began the mighty conflict against the crushing despotism of a corrupt and apostate hierarchy. With cordial sympathy and fervent love, the churches of the Reformation extend the hand of Christian fellowship and communion to their elder sister. They rejoice in the evangelical simplicity and the apostolic zeal, which have furnished so many precious illustrations of the power of a Saviour's grace and truth, during the four centuries of her experience. When we turn to the glaciers of Greenland and to the icy plains of Labrador, we admire the self-denying fortitude of the Christian heroes, the Arctic navigators of the gospel, forcing their way into the heart of a frozen world, in search of the lost Esquimaux. We listen to the choral music which finds its way through frosty mist and driving snows to the ear of the Almighty Saviour; we bow in adoration at the feet of the Redeemer, who gathers to himself a congregation of his redeemed from the poor outcast sa-

vages, oppressed with poverty and wretchedness, and blinded by degrading and dark superstition. What heart in all this community alive to generous emotions, has been unmoved by the tidings of the early death of the heroic young man, who at the age of thirty-six years has paid his life a sacrifice to the noble call of Christian humanity, which bade him seek and save that which was lost! Dear, generous heart! We know, it is God's will that thou shouldst cease to feel on earth the throbbings of that precious sympathy, and we submit; but science, humanity, religion will embalm thy memory and give it a shrine in the great Christian heart of the nation which claims thee as her jewel!

And can the church of God forget the Arctic explorers of the gospel? Their search is not yet abandoned. Still, amid all the perils of that ice-bound coast—amid the wasting darkness of the Arctic night—amid all the dreary solitude of isolation from the social comforts of civilized life, those servants of God continue, dependent for their subsistence upon the annual visit of the missionary ship, which has never failed since 1770* to accomplish

* Up to the year 1853, this missionary ship had made eighty-three voyages, without a serious disaster, and never before or since that period, has the communication with the missionaries in a single instance been interrupted. Truly a most noteworthy providence.

its errand of mercy—God protected amid howling winds and driving mountains of ice;—still, with faith that never falters, and with patience that never tires, this labour of seeking the lost sheep in the icy wilderness, is prosecuted, and the voice of the Greenlander and the Esquimaux, saved—safe in heaven, joins in the new song which they sing before the throne, who have come up out of great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Brethren, we ask with the grateful apostle in the language of our text, “What thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God!”

Our God—not your God only,—but OUR God. Paul held and *we* would hold the communion of saints.

That which has been done on the icy fields of North America, has been accomplished also on the burning sands of Southern Africa. The Caffre and the Hottentot sunk in the abyss of degradation, wandering in the darkness of heathenism, the slaves of hateful, grovelling passions—have been taught the power of the love of Christ, and redeemed, regenerated, clothed and in their right mind, are seen, sitting at the feet of Christ, swelling the ranks of the sacramental throng on earth, and joining in heaven the multitude, who shout,

salvation to God and the Lamb. The poor negro of the West Indian Isles in the day of his bondage heard the message of gospel liberty from the lips of Moravian Missionaries, and learned to acquiesce with joyful cheerfulness in that saying of St. Paul, "Art thou called being a slave? Care not for it—for he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's free man—likewise he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant." Where the pestilence has walked in mysterious darkness, wasting at noon-day and scattering terror and destruction, there the humble missionary of the Brethren's Church, has stood unmoved, content to go home to God, if God should call, content to live, that he might seek and save the more; and there amid the graves of a thousand victims—amid the monuments of the great and the titled—amid the unnoticed and unmarked hillocks that cover the slain of the Destroyer, stand the humble graves of these servants of God, who went forth, stepping upon the tombs of their precursors, and preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, though they felt the ground crumbling under their feet, and opening its mouth to receive them. "What thanks can we render to God again for you!"

The question has sometimes been asked and occasionally, perhaps, in a tone of disappointment, and discontented surprise: how is it, that whilst

the missionary operations of the Church of the United Brethren, have been so signally blessed in the various foreign fields which they have entered, until the number of converts from Paganism, presents a host of not less than seventy-one thousand four hundred and fifty souls; that department which is known as home ground, has until recently, done little more than hold its own against the encroachments of death and of other providences, which, in this connexion, might seem almost adverse? My object is not to account for this fact, but simply to present a single thought which seems, to my mind, not unworthy of notice. From the early history of your branch of the Church Catholic, it is easy to gather one leading indication of the special purpose of God's providence, in calling forth the Bohemian brethren, to bear testimony for Jesus. The lamp of the gospel of life burned with a pure bright flame of holy love, and now it is asked, why was it not set in a large place, that it might have made many more rejoice in its brightness? Our first answer must be, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,"—but the reason is perhaps not altogether secret. A lamp is useful for more purposes than a single one. We need it to afford light in the darkness—and here was a burning and a shining light which poured its rays upon the midnight of

many a soul, now in glory. But the lamp may be useful also in the cold winter, to kindle the fire, when the day is approaching,—and though that flame be small, and though the taper be but a little one, it is none the less efficient for the purpose. “Behold how great matter a little fire kindleth,” is a proverbial exclamation of inspired wisdom. And so it has proved in your history. The watch fires that burn around Mount Zion, marking the encampments of larger hosts than yours, were kindled from the flame which God lighted in the days of your fathers, kindled with the fire that burned upon your hearth, and even if the ashes had covered the last coal in your Israel, and nothing were left of the glimmering lamp but the smoking flax, it would still leave cause for holy gratitude and for believing hope, so long as the promise stands sure, and it will be sure for ever, “The bruised reed shall he not break, the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; the isles shall wait for his law. Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein; I, the Lord, have called thee in

righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.”

It has been the glory of the Brethren's Church that, in the true spirit of her divine Master, she has been most concerned for those who were the most abject and forsaken. She has sought fields from which, we will not say, others turned disheartened, but to which, at least, they never went until she led the way. She has built on no foundation, which other hands have dug or laid. She has sought, like the great apostle of the gentiles, to preach Christ where Christ was not preached before, and if others have entered subsequently, when the seed sown by her servants has covered the field with white and waving harvests, she has welcomed them and prayed the Lord of the harvest to send even more. It has been her honour, by the allotment of divine providence and grace, to be the pioneer and the humble path-finder in the great cause of missions to the heathen world, and if she should ever become the least among the tribes of God's Israel, she has, like Benjamin, led the van in the sharpest conflicts with the enemies of our common Lord; and until the Lord comes to claim the hea-

then for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, she cannot lose the honour which the Prince of the House of David has put upon her! Then, let the voice of complaining never be heard in her borders, as though she were "as a lamp despised of him that is at ease." The God whose favour is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life, fixes the bounds of our habitation, and when the time has come to stretch out our curtain, he will strengthen the stakes. In view of this thought also, we say, "What thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God?"

Nor can we lose sight of another ground of thankful praise, presented in the fact, that for four hundred years, the Church of the United Brethren has never swerved from the doctrinal simplicity that is in Christ. It has been her policy, and would that in this respect her example had been universally imitated, to exclude all questions that engender strife, and to consign them to the gentiles in the outer court. She has not wasted her energies by fretting about abstractions. She has not intruded into the arena of political contentions. She has preached the same gospel to the master and to the slave. She has sought the souls of men, and to bond and free alike, she has proclaimed the liberty and the yoke of Christ. She has sought first of

all and more than all, to pervade every relation in life, with the holy leaven of the love of God in Jesus Christ. She has troubled herself with no schemes of a world devised moral reform—she has engrafted none of the asceticism of an Essene infidelity upon the gospel of Christ—she has desired to add nothing to the precepts of her Lord, and to take nothing from the requirements of His word—she has reverently accepted the book of God as a pure and complete revelation; she has been content to follow, wherever she could find the foot-prints of the Master, and as she has sought peace and pursued it, so she has found and enjoyed it in the unbroken fellowship of her communion.

Brethren, let us never forget it, they walk safely who follow where the Saviour leads. One word of Christ is worth all, and more than all the volumes which the wisdom of the world has ever penned. That voice which sounds in the oracles of God, calling to the pilgrims who look for a better country that is a heavenly, "This is the way, walk ye in it,"—never yet has led a traveller astray, and he who takes God's word as a light to his feet and a lamp to his path, amid all the ruggedness of the way, shall never take his place with them, whose judges are overthrown in stony places, though his prayer may often be with them in their calamities.

To those salient points which are of special de-

nominal interest, your beloved pastor is better prepared to direct your grateful remembrance than myself, and I have therefore chosen those reflections which are of general and Catholic interest, as more appropriate to the duty which you have kindly assigned me on this anniversary occasion.

In conclusion, permit me earnestly and with Christian affection, to enforce a few practical suggestions; and first, Brethren,

Cultivate the spirit of missions. It is the spirit which animated your fathers; it is that which the apostles breathed, and which filled the heart of the Saviour. It is emphatically the Spirit of Christ. It is the life of the church which he loved and for which he gave himself. It is the motive power of the work, in which God has pre-eminently blessed and honoured you. Let not the sacred fire which made the apostles burn with holy zeal for the salvation of dying men—the fire which glowed in the baptism of Pentecost, when those tongues of flame rested upon the apostolic band, and filled with the Holy Ghost and faith they went forth to preach Jesus and the Resurrection—that fire which has made the names of Kleinschmidt and Dober, Nitschman and Zinzendorf, great in the annals of the church of God—let not that fire burn dimly on your altars.—Feed it, when you commune with God in secret. Let it be kindled afresh, when in

the solemn assembly you take counsel together and your heart burns within you, whilst you meet the Saviour in his ordinances, and he is known to you in the breaking of bread. Let your children be imbued with it. Make them familiar with the heroes of your mission history, and with the names, the position, the wants of them who stand on the ramparts on which the fathers fell; and above all, let the consecration of your persons and substance go with your supplications to the throne of divine grace, and He will make his promise good, "Instead of the fathers shall be the children;" and in the borders of your Zion, the Lord of the harvest shall ever find a generation to serve him, until the promise is fulfilled, and all who have "gone forth bearing precious seed and weeping, shall come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them;" and in that heavenly home of the church of God, there shall be one fold and one Shepherd.

2. *Cherish your own institutions, your own order and discipline.* I am not pleading the cause of bigotry, or exclusiveness, when I offer this word of exhortation. I would give the same counsel to every household of faith. You do no wrong to society, when you pay special regard to the welfare and order of your own family, and you do none to the church of the living God—none to the claims of Christian charity—none to the bonds of Christian

fellowship, when you strengthen the cords which bind in living and efficient union the spiritual family, in which God has cast your lot. On the contrary, you do grievous injury to that Catholic church, the universal body of believers in the Lord Jesus, when you weaken the bond of brotherhood, which has hitherto made your church the blessed instrument of bringing the lost sheep of the wilderness to the fold of the good Shepherd. This very communion of saints gives to all who love the Saviour a deep interest in your prosperity, because upon it, God has made a heavy weight of responsibility dependent. He has given you not only a great work to do, but he has conferred a special adaptation for its accomplishment. He has given you the advantage of a history and experience peculiarly your own, and under God, next to the preaching of a pure gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, your success depends upon devotion to your own institutions, order and discipline. Progress is God's order, but sheer innovation is not progress. I question whether some concessions to the spirit of the age are not in reality improvements at the expense of the power and vitality of the church. If they invade the sanctuary, in which the simplicity and godly sincerity of Christian character have found their shrine—if they impair the singleness of heart, with which

faith offers all to the service of the blessed Redeemer, they are dear at any price. These virtues are not so common, that the church of God can afford to lose even the selvage, which trimming time-servers are ever ready to clip from the seamless robe of Christ. There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit, and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God "which worketh all in all;" and in the economy of divine grace all these are tending to the completion of the glorious building of God. Oh! when its top-stone shall be brought forth with shoutings, Grace, grace unto it! when the last of God's ransomed ones shall be gathered in, and the last of the lost whom Jesus came to seek shall be found, and the Redeemer shall not only see of the travail of his soul, but shall be satisfied, then in full view of the unsearchable riches of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, in the full experience of the entire church of God, the tribes of ransomed Israel shall greet every man his neighbour with this congratulation, "What thanks can we render to God again, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;" and in the full realization of the church Catholic and the blissful communion of saints, all that ransomed throng, shall join as the general assembly and church of

the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, with the innumerable company of angels on mount Sion, in that glorious doxology of the song that is ever new, to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, even "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made ~~us~~ ^{us} kings and priests unto God the Father, to Him

Evening Service.

SERMON

BY THE REV. R. NEWTON, D.D., RECTOR OF ST. PAUL'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

“Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”
—PHILIPPIANS iii. 16.

THE Bible is a magazine of principles for the regulation of our conduct. Our great aim, in reading and studying its pages, should be to make ourselves familiar with those principles, that we may be able to draw them out and apply them, as circumstances may demand. The great point of difference between a Christian and one who is not a Christian, lies chiefly in this—that the one will regulate and rule his conduct by the principles of the Bible, while the other will be guided either by no fixed principles at all, or by principles that are fundamentally false. In the text before us we have the principle laid down by the Apostle, in

accordance with which professing Christians, of differing names, and opinions, may regulate their intercourse with each other. This is a point on which many conscientious persons are often at a loss to know how they should act. It is a point too in reference to which every Christian will, at one time or other, be called upon either to act, or decline acting. To ascertain distinctly then what is the undoubted teaching of the word of God on this subject, cannot be otherwise than an interesting and important matter. The subject too is very appropriate to the present occasion. I have the privilege this night of addressing myself to the members of a sister church—differing in name as well as in other things from that in which I was born and brought up: a church now celebrating the fourth centennial anniversary of its existence. Into the peculiar facts and circumstances which have marked the history of these centuries it is not my purpose to enter. These have been already considered by your own pastor, who is much better prepared to do justice to such a theme than a stranger could be. But in view of the apostolic character of the ministry exercised in your church: in view of the evangelical doctrines she has always upheld—in view of the Christian simplicity and love which have characterized her—especially in view of her earnest, faithful, self-denying and success-

ful labours in the great work of spreading the glorious gospel of the Son of God throughout a fallen world, I cannot but rejoice in the opportunity afforded me, of uniting with you, in the exercises of this interesting occasion. It is an appropriate time to discuss, *the scriptural rule of Christian fellowship*. And this rule I consider St. Paul as laying down in our text—when he says, “Nevertheless, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”

Now, in dwelling on these words, we may remark, *in the first place, that St. Paul takes it for granted that there would be differences of opinion among Christians*. This is perfectly evident from the very language of the apostle, for he here lays down a rule for the direction of Christians under their differences; and being guided by an all-wise, and infallible Spirit, he would not have given a rule for a state of things which was never to exist. Nay, he not only implies that there would be differences, but states positively that there was a necessity for them, saying to the Corinthians, (1 Epist. xi. 19,) “There *must* be heresies among you, that they who are approved may be made manifest.” We are apt to regard the division of the Christian world into so many different sects, as the source of nothing but evil. But this is not the case. On the contrary is the occasion of good, in various ways. We

have no reason to suppose that it would be better on the whole, for the church, if the numerous denominations into which it is divided were all reduced to one. We can think of many respects in which advantage would be gained, if uniformity of thought and action could be secured, on many of the points which now divide the church: but it is easy to imagine *disadvantages* too, which would result from such a state of things, amidst the imperfections of our present condition. Our divine Redeemer is possessed of infinite wisdom to determine what is best for his church; and he is possessed of infinite power too, to accomplish what that wisdom dictates. He might have made all his people to think and feel alike on the different subjects which now divide them: and the only reason we can assign for his not doing so, is, that he did not see it to be best. Uniformity of speech once prevailed on the earth, and Babel's presumptuous tower remained as a monument of the God-defying wickedness to which it led. Time was, in the history of the church, when it had but one earthly head, and one uniform practice in regard to outward things; but that head was the corrupt and tyrannical Pope of Rome, and that uniformity was the uniformity of death. Sectarian bitterness and uncharitableness are great evils indeed; but sects in themselves, the mere existence of different

opinions on certain points, and of different denominations founded upon them, is not in itself an evil; but on the contrary is productive of much good. We are satisfied that larger contributions to the cause of benevolence, and more vigorous, and extensive exertions in the various departments of Christian enterprise, are made by the church, as it now is, than would probably be made if one denomination embraced the whole multitude of Christ's professing people. But constituted as we now are, in this imperfect state, it is impossible, in the very nature of things, but that division and differences should exist. It is utterly out of the question that in the wide range of subjects embraced in our religious creeds all men should think alike. "In the Protestant church," I quote the language of an eloquent writer, "it would be inconsistent with what is stated in the Bible, to make all the sections of the church uniform in rites, ceremonies and discipline. I believe that it would not only be contrary to what is written in the Bible, but it would be inexpedient as a matter of fact. I believe it was not God's design that there should be uniformity in grace, any more than there should be in nature. If we look at the firmament of heaven, God might have made every star of the sixth magnitude, or of the first magnitude; but he has not done so, for one star differs from another star

in glory. If we look upon earth, each flower differs from another flower in fragrance and in tints. God might have made each flower a rose, but he has not done so. He has made many flowers, of many sizes, of many tints, all having one grand principle in common, their vegetable life, but developing that principle in every variety of tint and blossom and beauty. Nature resists uniformity, and so does grace. If you go into the woods in the season of autumn, and cut each outspreading oak into the form of a perfect cone, you will thus have made each oak the fac-simile of its fellow, and produced a most complete, and perfect sylvan uniformity. But is this the will of Him who made the trees? Wait a little, wait till the spring returns. The moment that the sap of life rises from the roots into the trunks and breaks out into foliage, that moment the uniformity is gone; for each branch will develop itself in some points of diversity from the rest; and the dead trees alone will remain as man shaped them, to let the uniformist know, that God meant unity to be in nature, but not uniformity in development. And so it is in the church of Christ. And wherever a pope with his tiara, or an archbishop Laud with his crozier, or a king with his sceptre, or a Cromwell with his iron sword, has tried to make Christians perfectly uniform in all things, he has found

a power mightier than kings and popes and prelates and councils, in the great law which God has established in his kingdom of grace, telling us that unity in essentials with diversity in development, is God's great design." We may well say therefore, that the apostle takes it for granted in our text that differences would exist among Christians.

We remark, in the second place, that the apostle teaches us that the existence of these differences should not prevent kindly feelings and intercourse on the part of those who hold the fundamental truths of the gospel. The mere reading of the text shows this. The apostle's rule is, that when the essential doctrines of the gospel are held, then intercourse and union should be maintained just to the extent to which those who hold these doctrines may find themselves agreed. Merging, or keeping out of sight the things about which they do not agree, they should unite on those fundamental points which they hold in common. And this brings up the question, what is fundamental truth? Now it is manifest that nothing connected merely with church government, order or arrangement can be thus considered. These matters are important in their place. They should be highly prized, diligently held, and zealously contended for; but still they are not fundamental. This word has reference to the foundation of a building. But the

foundation is that without which the building cannot stand. And just so the fundamental truths of the gospel are those without a knowledge and belief of which the soul cannot be saved. Of this character are the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, of the necessity of the new birth, of faith in Christ, and of a personal union with Him. These are strictly fundamental truths, for without these there can be no salvation. But I suppose that the most ultra and bigoted member, either of your church, or mine, or any other Protestant church in the land, will hardly be willing to put any question connected with the peculiarities of the denomination to which he belongs, in comparison with these; or to take the ground, for a moment, that there can be no salvation for those who differ from him, in the views he holds, respecting the ministry, or government of the church, the form of its worship, the manner of administering the sacraments, or any such matters. What St. Paul's views were, on this point, is manifest from what he says to the Galatians, (chap. vi. 16.) "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." And if you ask what rule is it of which St. Paul here speaks? We have our answer by referring to the verse immediately preceding that just quoted. There we find him declaring, that "In Christ Jesus, neither circum-

cision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” And then he adds immediately, “As many as walk according to *this* rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” Now we are to bear in mind that “circumcision” was the great sacrament of the Jewish church. It bore precisely the same relation to the pious Jew, which baptism, or the Lord’s Supper bears to the sincere Christian. It was quite as important and sacred a thing to him, as either of these sacraments can be to us. The apostle evidently uses the term “circumcision” here, to denote outward ordinances, or sacraments of any kind. And the position which he assumes, is, that no question of this nature, can be of any importance compared with the question of our renewal in Christ, and our union with him by faith. We have only to substitute the term baptism, or the Lord’s Supper, or episcopacy, or any other matter about which professing Christians differ, and we have the apostle’s rule adapted to our times, and bearing directly on the controversies which exist among us. The rule will then read thus: To be baptized availeth nothing, or not to be baptized; to receive the Lord’s Supper availeth nothing, or not to receive it; to hold to episcopacy availeth nothing, or not to hold to it; to practise immersion availeth nothing, or not to practise it; to use extemporary or written prayers

availeth nothing, or not to use them; "*but a new creature.*" That is, these things are nothing, without, or in comparison of our being in Christ, united to him by a living faith. The necessity for this union with him is the grand fundamental truth of the gospel, compared with which everything else is unimportant. And when the apostle says, "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them," it is perfectly evident that he means to teach us to give the right hand of fellowship to all who receive Christ as their Saviour and hold Him as their Head, and give good evidence of their union with Him, however much they may differ from us in other respects. This is the undoubted meaning of St. Paul's language in the passage before us. This is the scriptural rule which the apostle lays down in reference to the duty of which we are treating. And when he, under the guidance of the infallible Spirit, clearly and authoritatively enjoins this rule, who will refuse to act in accordance with it, or attempt to lay down any other?

We remark now, in the third place, that not only does St. Paul take for granted that differences would exist, and that the existence of these differences need be no hinderance to the maintenance of kindly intercourse with each other; but he enjoins it as a duty to cultivate Christian fellowship and charity, even with those who differ from us, just so far as

we are able to agree. We mean not to intimate that the peculiarities which distinguish us as denominations from each other, should be thought lightly of or made of no account. By no means. We only intend that in properly maintaining these peculiarities, there exists no reason why we should refuse to acknowledge and love as Christian brethren, believers of other names, who love the same Saviour, and who walk, it may be, much more worthily of him than we do, simply because they cannot think as we do, respecting the ministry and government of the church, and matters of the like character. This was evidently not St. Paul's view of the subject when he wrote the language of our text. It may be said, that the differences now at issue among Christians, had not then arisen. True they had not. But then the omniscient and infallible Spirit of the living God, under whose guidance Paul wrote, knew perfectly well that they would arise, and He would not have laid down a broad and general rule for our direction in such cases, unless he had intended that it should be applied and used. And seeing that we are furnished with such a rule, from such a source, we may be assured that from the proper application of it no practical evil can arise. It is often said indeed, that for the members or ministers of one church to unite with their brethren of other denominations, in carrying

forward any of the great benevolent enterprises of the present day, involves a sacrifice of those principles about which they differ. But this statement is utterly untrue. The very language of our text confutes it. The rule which it furnishes is an effectual safeguard against any such result. For while Christians unite only in reference to those things about which they are agreed, how can this involve any sacrifice of those things about which they are not agreed, and in reference to which they have no thought of uniting? For example, a minister of your church, or of mine, meets with Christians of different names on the platform of the Bible society, and unites with them in their plans and efforts for its wider circulation; now what possible principle peculiar to him as a minister of the Moravian, or Episcopal church, does he compromise in acting thus? In the apostle's language, both he and those with whom he associates have attained to this, that they esteem the Bible as the most precious of all God's gifts to a fallen world; they have attained to this, that the unfettered circulation of it is one of the noblest employments in which they can possibly engage; and they have attained to this, too, that it is the solemn and imperative duty of all who love it, to send it freely to others. And having "attained" unto this, is it not scriptural, and right and proper that they

should "walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing?" Is there not the very clearest authority for such fellowship in the language of the text?

How beautifully we sometimes see the apostle's rule illustrated in its practical operation? Here, for instance, is an example. Some years ago, a public meeting was held in one of the mid-land counties of England for the establishment of an Auxiliary Bible Society. Two gentlemen, Mr. G. and Mr. T., the former a clergyman of the church of England, and the latter a minister of one of the Independent churches, and who had never seen each other before, were appointed the joint secretaries of the Institution. One of the resolutions adopted delegated to them the duty of visiting the county, for the purpose of forming branch societies, in connexion with the newly established Auxiliary.

On their first introduction, the following conversation took place between them. "Our friend," said Mr. G., "has just introduced me as a clergyman of the church of England. You, Sir, if I am rightly informed, are a minister of the Independent denomination. It is, therefore, evident that we entertain different views on some subjects. Such being the case, and as we shall have to traverse the county throughout its length and breadth, and to pass not only hours but days in company with each other, I have been seriously thinking

whether it may not save us some little unpleasantness if we mutually agree upon a principle to govern our intercourse. What think you, sir?"

"I am perfectly aware, my dear sir," replied Mr. T., "of our relative positions, and the same subject and desire have occupied much of my thoughts since yesterday. I entirely agree with you in the desirableness of such an arrangement as you have suggested, and shall be truly glad to know what has been the result of your deliberations."

"My proposition," said Mr. G., "is simply this; that we begin by talking of the subjects on which we *agree*; and, when we have exhausted all of these, *then* begin with those on which we differ."

"A most excellent plan," said Mr. T., "and one that has my most cordial assent. I adopt it with all my heart."

These excellent men were colleagues for seven years, when the death of one dissolved their union upon earth. They annually laboured together for a portion of their time, with increasing comfort to themselves and benefit to others; and frequently they were both heard to declare, "We never exhausted the subjects on which we agreed, and therefore had no occasion to enter upon those on which we differed."

How blessed a thing it would be for the church of our divine Master, if the spirit which animated

these two men were cherished and cultivated by all “who profess and call themselves Christians!” How far it would tend to heal the wounds of the daughter of Zion, and to take away her reproach from among men? May our consideration of the subject on this interesting occasion, increase and strengthen this spirit in all of us, my brethren. May the spirit of true Christian love and fellowship take full possession of our hearts, and dwell therein forever! Then, indeed, shall our souls prosper! For,

“E’en as the dew, that, at the break of morning,
All nature with its beauty is adorning,
And flows from heaven, calm and still,
And bathes the tender grass on Zion’s hill,
And to the young and withering herb resigns
The drops for which it pines:
So are fraternal peace and concord ever
The cherishers without whose guidance, never
Would sainted quiet seek the breast,—
The life, the soul of unmolested rest,—
The antidote to sorrow and distress,
And prop of human happiness.”

Before closing, and to show that the view now taken of this passage is the correct one, I quote the exposition given of it, by two eminent commentators. Poole, the author of *Annotations on the Bible*, thus discourses upon it, “*Let us mind the same thing*: in like manner all of us who are spiritual, grown Christians, should be affected,

being of one accord, one mind and judgment, in imitation of Christ; so far, that in the fundamental articles, we should still be perfecting holiness in the fear of God; so that by the same rule of faith, by the unity of judgments in the main business of religion, by the concord of our affections, by the concurrence of our ends, and by our consent and delight in the truth, we should declare, that in our differences Christ is not divided, but in the variety of persuasions in lesser matters, the purity, holiness, and peace of the church is still preserved. For it is more reasonable, that the many truths wherein we agree should cause us to join in love, which is a Christian duty, than that the few opinions wherein we disagree, should cause a breach in affection, which is a human infirmity."

Our excellent brother, and fellow-townsmen, Mr. Barnes, in commenting on the passage now before us, thus speaks, "This is a most wise and valuable rule, and a rule that would save much trouble and contention, if it were honestly applied. The meaning is this, that though there might be different degrees of attainments among Christians, and different views on many subjects, yet there were points on which all could agree, and in reference to *them*, they should walk in harmony and love. It might be that some had made greater advances than others. They might see the truth or propriety

of many things, which those less favoured could not see clearly. But it was not worth while to quarrel about these things. There *were* many things in which they could see alike, and where there were no jarring sentiments. In those things they could act harmoniously, and thus the harmony of the church would be secured. No better rule than this could be applied to the subjects of inquiry which spring up among Christians respecting various doctrines of religion, as well as plans of benevolence; and if this rule had been observed, the church would have been always saved from harsh contention and from schism. If a man does not see things just as I do, let me try with mildness to teach him, and let me believe, that if he is a Christian, God will yet make this known to him; but let me not quarrel with him, for neither of us would be benefited by that, nor would the object be likely to be obtained. In the meantime, there are many things in which we can agree. In them let us work together, and strive, as far as we can, to promote the common object. Thus we shall save our temper, give no occasion to the world to reproach us, and be much more likely to come together in all our views. The best way to make Christians harmonize, is to labour together in the common cause of saving souls. As far as we *can* agree, let us go and labour together; and where we *cannot*, yet let us agree to differ. We shall all think alike by and by."

“Nevertheless, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”

There are two thoughts we would press on your consideration in closing, as suggested by this subject, and the first is this: *That the spirit of the gospel is a spirit of enlarged and comprehensive charity.* Our poor fallen nature is continually prone to imitate the conduct of those disciples who desired their Master to let them call down fire from heaven on some, no matter what their character or works were, simply because they walked not with them. But Jesus rebuked this uncharitable spirit, and taught his erring followers, that it was quite possible there might be labourers in his vineyard, who trod a different path from that in which they walked, and yet were just as acceptable to Him as they themselves were. And when we plume ourselves on our denominational distinctions; and indulge in unkindly feelings towards others, or give utterance to harsh speeches respecting them, what are we doing but acting over again the part of the disciples, and striving as far as our ability goes to call down fire from heaven on those who differ from us? O, if all such narrow-minded, bigoted, fiery zealots had their way, what a scene of mutual burning there would be in the land! But thanks be to God, this spirit is not the spirit of the gospel

Jesus tasted death for every man; and “in every nation, he that worketh righteousness is accepted of Him.” He died for all of every name; He receives all of every name; He loves all of every name; and He saves all of every name who submit themselves to Him. And if we really love the Head, we shall love the members too, so far as they bear his image, by whatever name they may be called, and however differently, in some respects, they may think from us. This is the spirit of Christ; and the charity of the gospel consists in cultivating and carrying out this spirit. This is the spirit which the church of Christ should breathe through all her services, teaching her members to strive to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;” and to pray for “all who *profess* and call themselves Christians, that they may be led in the way of truth.” And the more of this spirit any man has, other things being equal, the better Christian he will be, and the better member of the church; while without it no man can be a good Christian, or a good member of the church. And this being the case, the other thought we would press upon you is perfectly plain, to wit: *That it is every man’s duty to cultivate this spirit!* The precepts of the gospel require it. “Let this same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,” is an injunction from whose binding power no fol-

lower of Christ can escape. The mind of Christ, is, to love all of our race who yield their hearts to his grace, and exercise faith in his prevailing merits. And if we have this mind, we shall love all those whom we have reason to believe that Christ loves. We shall feel that if we and they have really been brought to love him, this is, of itself, a ground of agreement, a bond of union in comparison of which everything else is secondary and insignificant. If there is one article in the creed we hold, the tendency of which is to generate unkindliness of feeling towards those who differ from us in points which are not strictly fundamental, then we may mark that article, and be thoroughly satisfied of one of two things concerning it, either the article is contrary to Scripture in itself, or we are holding it in a way which makes it equivalent to what is contrary to Scripture. No truth which the Scriptures teach, held in the spirit which the Scriptures breathe, will ever generate unkindliness of feeling towards any of the people of Christ. And how would the interests of the gospel be promoted by the cultivation of this lovely Christian spirit? I do not say what a glorious thing it would be if all denominational differences were done away, for that will never be till Jesus comes again; but I *do* say what a glorious thing it would be if all denominational bitterness and uncharitableness were

done away; and those who name the name of Jesus, would adopt the apostle's principle laid down in the text, and "whereunto they have attained, would walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing." But this will never be done in a general way until it is done in a particular way; it will never be done by churches or communities, till it is done by individuals.

Then let each one of us take up this matter, my Christian friends, and to the full extent of our personal influence and example, try to cultivate and spread abroad the scriptural spirit of Christian fellowship. The ocean is just what the individual drops of water in its unfathomed depths make it. The atmosphere with its arch of boundless blue, is just what the individual particles of air wrought into its composition make it. And so the church of Christ is only what every member of that church helps to make it. What are we doing to liberalize its spirit, to imbue it and surround it with the atmosphere of heaven? That atmosphere is one of loving fellowship and charity. My friends, let us seek to carry about us wherever we go this heavenly atmosphere. And then we shall know

How sweet it is, through life's dark way,

In Christian fellowship to move,

Illumed by one unclouded ray

And one in faith, in hope, in love!

Amen.



Alice Helabrand

Emma Wick

L. H. Baughman

Lena Stambough

Sarah Beecher

Emma Aulabough

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